

## Contributions

### HOW INDUCE YOUNG MEN TO ENTER THE MINISTRY?

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Religious bodies, like secular concerns, are encountered with difficulties, and face problems demanding a solution. As a distinct body we have our problems; some of greater and others of less sequence. However, there are few attaching more importance to themselves than the one now before us; and a careful disposition of this question will insure a bright future to the church of our choice.

I deem it within the bounds of truth to say that all churches in all ages, have advanced in growth and usefulness in the same proportion as their ministries have increased in proficiency and numbers. True, all strength does not lie in numbers, but we beg to submit that a ministry numerically strong is a just principle in a strong church.

The ministry may be said to sustain a two-fold relation to the church: First, in that the church finds her ministry a great source for incoming power. And secondly, in that the ministry is the one most effectual means thru which an aggressive influence is expected.

It is a source for incoming power in the sense that, the growth and development of local congregations is largely dependent upon the ministry. A strong ministry, therefore, naturally implies better pastoral and cultivated local congregations, as a result of which, the entire body enjoys a continual increase in strength.

It is a means thru which influence is exerted in the sense that, the opening of new fields is left almost entirely to the ministry. I also conclude, therefore, that a strong ministry implies the opening of more new fields, into which the organized church may throw her influence.

Doubtless, the real mission of the church, as designed by the Master, is to exert a wholesome, uplifting influence upon the race. To accomplish this end, the church must sustain a constant incoming strength from God, followed by the strength that comes from continually gathering men and women into the body. Upon these two vital principles, incoming strength, out-going influence, hangs the usefulness of the church. And I maintain that God uses the ministry to support and further these principles, thus accomplishing his eternal purpose in the church of his Son.

If these statements hold, therefore, in the light of the past and of reason, and if the general Protestant church does rest on such principles as are herein set forth, may we not rightfully conclude that the same principles obtain in the Brethren church? Without doubt, they do; the Brethren church is not an exception (in that respect at least). But the development of the Brethren church does depend, to an enormous extent, upon

her ministry. And since this is a state occasion I should say the development of the Brethren church in the state of Ohio, does depend upon her ministry. It is in the light of these considerations, therefore, that our subject assumes an aspect of gravity and importance.

The church of the state of Ohio sustains a standing and growing need for an increased ministry. The work in general has been much hampered; some of our fields acquired in the past have sadly deteriorated and scarcely any new fields have been opened, all for a lack of preachers. This scarcity naturally throws too much work upon a few laborers. There are but few ministers in the State serving less than two congregations, while a number are laboring in three or four charges; and it is a fact that if this were not done some churches would have no preaching whatever. Such conditions imply very hard, disadvantageous work, and, from the fact that the average man can do well just so much work (the minister included) it naturally follows that some congregations cannot receive as much attention as is essential to their best development. Now these conditions are not imaginary, but real; not fanciful, but true, and any one in a position to judge the situation in the State knows and laments that they are true.

We are all concerned about the growth of the church; we all regret that her advancement has been thus hindered. We should all rejoice to see her put in such a position as would enable her to do and be all within her possibility; and, unless I am far wrong we all believe that an increased ministry is the highway leading out of this our greatest difficulty. The question, therefore, is, how shall we thrust more laborers into the whitened fields? More laborers to cultivate our present fields, more to open new fields. Shall we look to Pennsylvania, or Maryland, or Indiana for help? Or rather, are they not also experiencing the same need in some degree? Can we expect to have our older and faithful ministers with us forever? We need them much and are loathe to spare them, but they cannot live and labor always. Is it not the exception rather than the rule for men in middle life to enter the ministry? We believe it is. What then is the source from which to draw more ministers? I hear a general consent—the young men of the brotherhood must be the source from which to draw our ministers. Doubtless it was the conviction in the minds of the executive committee that pointed them to submit such a question.

"How" then, "shall we induce young men to enter the ministry?" Before entering upon any discussion as to ways and means of inducement, the writer begs indulgence to deal slightly with what would seem a practical precedent of the question. I beg, therefore, to have the subject say, "How induce proper young men to enter the ministry?" Thus we may have first things first in order. How to induce, is important, but

who to induce is, if possible, more important.

I should say, therefore, that utmost precaution should be exercised in selecting the young man. To urge any young man to choose some special profession is a serious matter. This world has many nicks for many men: To every man his nick. I do not say that God has intended every individual for a particular place in this vast stage of human activity, altho he may, but whether he does or does not, I maintain that each individual possesses such natural endowments, such inclinations as specially suit him for some particular sphere. And I further maintain that the greatest possibilities of the individual lie within that sphere toward which he is most naturally inclined. Happy, therefore, is that one who finds his nick, who chooses that profession which calls into action his natural endowment; while a pitiable spectacle indeed is one who misses his place in the world.

"Still rolling on with innate force,  
Without a sphere, without a course."

Thus we need to be careful in making our selection, for it is grave to induce. True, many a young man has been led into vast fields of usefulness by an advising friend, while others have fallen to flattest failure by yielding to injudicious counsel.

How then shall we intelligently choose our young man? If the following considerations figure in your selection I fail to see how there can be any error. First, consider what the profession demands. Secondly, do the young man's inclinations tend toward meeting those demands? If so, then we may begin the inducements with safety. Now if what has been said is true, it will hold good in all professions. I contend that it will. Therefore, it must obtain in the ministerial profession, and that too, with greater force (if such be possible) than in secular affairs.

Before attempting to lead any young man into the ministry, therefore, it will be for the young man's good that you know what the ministry of Jesus Christ demands, and then be sure you see some inclination in the young man to satisfy the demand. Again, for the great interest God has in the young man and the church, be sure the hand of God is upon the young man. Above all things else, regard God in this matter, for back of every successful minister is the divine call. In the annals of the past God could always find a man where he needed him; nor have we reason to believe that he has changed in the least. Hence, I believe God seeks to choose his ministry today, albeit men frequently commit miserable blunders in relieving God of that task. Furthermore, I doubt not that when God wants a man in the ministry, he intimates it, at least in some measure, directly to the man. Then God may use other men to accomplish his end. At all events, if there be a mutual understanding between yourself and God, there can be no danger of getting